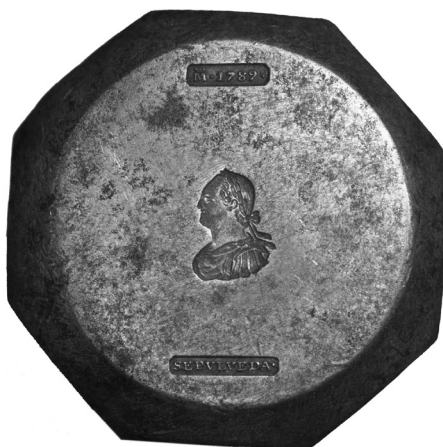


The
COLONIAL NEWSLETTER
A Research Journal in Early American Numismatics

Volume 52, Number 3

December 2012

Serial Number 150



Editorial

Pages 3941–3942

Roger A. Moore and David Gladfelter
*Which John Higley was the Minter
and Which John Higley Signed the
Land Transfer Papers?*

Pages 3941–3942

Roger A. Moore and Dennis Wierzba
*A Survey of Colonial Virginia Halfpence
Counterstamped with R.P.S
and a Theory for their Origin*

Pages 3956–3965

Ray Williams

*A Spanish Half-Real Device Matrix
from the Madrid Mint*

Pages 3966–3970

Oliver D. Hoover

*Colonial Coins in the ANS Collection
Plate Series:*

*FUGIO, Connecticut, and New Jersey,
Coppers, and Massachusetts Bay Silver
Part 8*

Pages 3971–3982

The Colonial Newsletter (CNL) is published three times a year by The American Numismatic Society (ANS), 75 Varick Street, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10013. *CNL* is available at the rate of \$45 per year for ANS members and \$60 per year for non-members. For inquiries concerning *CNL*, please contact Viviana Londono at the above postal address: e-mail <membership@numismatics.org>; telephone (212) 571-4470 ext. 117, or FAX (212) 571-4479. One can subscribe to *CNL* online or download a subscription form from the ANS website at <www.numismatics.org/CNL/CNL>.

ANS Executive Director: Dr. Ute Wartenberg Kagan

Editor Emeritus: James C. Spilman

***CNL* Staff**

Editor: Oliver D. Hoover <CNL@numismatics.org>

Contributing Editor: Philip L. Mossman, M.D.

Associate Editor: Dr. Louis E. Jordan

Associate Editor: Dr. John M. Kleeberg

Associate Editor: John J. Kraljevich, Jr.

Associate Editor: Gary Trudgen

Curatorial Assistant: Sylvia Karges

Visit the ANS website at <www.numismatics.org> and the *CNL* web page at <www.numismatics.org/CNL/CNL>.



Submitting Material for Publication

We encourage our readers to consider submitting material on early North American numismatics to *CNL* for publication. In general, this includes coins, tokens, paper money, and medals that were current before the U.S. Federal Mint began operations in 1793. However, there are certain pieces produced after the 1793 date that have traditionally been considered part of pre-Federal numismatics and should be included. We cover all aspects of study regarding the manufacture and use of these items. Our very knowledgeable and friendly staff will assist potential authors to finalize submissions by providing advice concerning the text and help with illustrations. Submissions in either electronic or hard copy format, should be sent to the editor via the e-mail address given above or through the ANS at their postal address. Electronic text submissions should be formatted in Word with separate grayscale images.



Editorial

Sometimes the world can be a hard place. This fact was perhaps brought into focus more starkly than usual in 2012, a year that has seen more than its share of natural and man-made disasters. Nevertheless, when we sit down to enjoy our coins as a pleasant escape from the destruction and carnage of the news, it is worth remembering that many of these precious objects are themselves symbols of hope and testaments to the endurance of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

The theme is obliquely picked up in an important article by Roger Moore and Dennis Wierzbna on Virginia halfpence counterstamped with the cryptic letters, R.P.S. If their tentative, but I think very convincing, interpretation of R.P.S. as the initials of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod (Church) and the coins so marked as communion tokens, then these counterstamped pieces represent the will of a repressed dissenting denomination to survive with their religious traditions intact in Anglican-dominated Virginia.

Somewhat more comically, hope is involved in Roger's second article in this issue, which he co-authored with David Gladfelter. Here they transcribe and discuss a recently sold 1749 land transfer document naming a certain John Higley as a witness. Thanks to their close analysis, it is clear that when the document was put up for auction, the cataloguer was operating more on hope than on clear facts when he identified the John Higley in question as the older brother of Samuel Higley and connected him with the endlessly

mythologized story of the Higley coppers of the late 1730s.

It gives me great personal pleasure to introduce the final article of this issue by Ray Williams, which presents a half *real* portrait matrix used at the Spanish-American mints. Although Ray is surely known to almost all *CNL* readers for his decade-long tenure as President of the Colonial Coin Collectors' Club (C4) and his even longer service as a dynamic force in colonial numismatics at large, the present piece represents the first time that he has had an article in *The Colonial Newsletter* in his own name. I think he won't mind me mentioning that when I first approached him about writing up his matrix, he was a little nervous about the prospect, but once he got into it he found that there were many people ready to help and that there was no need for misgivings. I am certain that readers will agree that his perseverance paid off and that rarely has a "paper weight" had such significance for colonial numismatics.

In addition to all of this, we also continue the series of plates describing and illustrating the ANS holdings of FUGIO coppers (Newman 11-B to 12-X), Connecticut coppers (Miller 6.4-I to 7.1-D), and New Jersey coppers (Maris 34-J to 38-Y). Having completed the Massachusetts state coppers in the last issue, it was decided to go back further in time and begin the presentation of the Society's large collection of Massachusetts Bay silver, beginning with the NE series.

In this season of endings and new beginnings, I and the entire editorial staff of *The Colonial Newsletter* join together in wishing that every good hope of 2013 will come to fruition for all of our readers.

Oliver D. Hoover
CNL@numismatics.org

Letter to the Editor

Oliver,

In this 150th issue of *CNL*, I would just like to take a moment to congratulate you, the past editors and all the contributors over these 52 years in print. Al Hoch (the founding editor) is no longer with us. The succeeding editors should be recognized for their great contributions to colonial numismatics: Jim Spilman, Phil Mossman, Gary Trudgen, and yourself. Thank you for the fine publication!

And thank you to all who have contributed. Any publication is no better than the articles that are submitted for publication. Colonial numismatics is certainly an area ripe for research. I look forward to the next 150 issues. At the rate of three issues a year, I'll be 110 when Issue 300 is printed.

Ray Williams

Which John Higley was the Minter and Which John Higley Signed the Land Transfer Papers?

by

Roger A. Moore, M.D.; Moorestown, NJ

and

David D. Gladfelter; Medford, NJ

Introduction

The purchase by the principal author of a Connecticut land transfer document from 1749, signed by one John Higley as witness to the conveyance, has prompted a fresh look at the minter(s) of the Higley coppers, dated 1737 and 1739.¹

According to tradition, at least some of these quaint pieces were made in a part of the town of Simsbury (now in Granby) in the colony of Connecticut, by Samuel Higley, a surgeon who also practiced metallurgy and owned and operated a local copper mine. Samuel Higley was lost at sea in May 1737, which leaves the source of the 1739-dated coppers in doubt. Samuel's older brother, John, is thought by some to have had a hand in their production, but as Q. David Bowers has noted, "Facts are scarce, while numismatic tradition is strong."²

The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the discrepancies surrounding the minting of the Higley (Granby) coppers, and to evaluate what, if any, significance the land transfer agreement may have in relation to the Higley ancestry.

Past Documentation

One of the earliest works on Colonial American numismatic history, including the Higley coppers, is John H. Hickcox's, *An Historical Account of American Coinage* (1858). Therein he states,

At Granby, Conn., about the year 1737, coppers circulated, called Highley's [*sic*] coppers. They were manufactured by Dr. Samuel Highley (said to have been an eccentric genius), who carried on this business clandestinely, without any authority from the colony.³

Hickcox cites Noah A. Phelps' recently published *History of Simsbury, Granby and Canton, from 1643 to 1845* (1845) as his source for this statement. According to Phelps,

A coin made from this ore, called "Higley's Coppers," was at one time in some circulation in the vicinity of the mines. It is said to have passed for two and sixpence, (forty-two cents,) in paper currency it is presumed, though composed chiefly, if not entirely, of copper... These coppers were much used for melting up with gold in the manufacture of jewelry, and for this purpose were considered vastly preferable to ordinary copper coin... The inventor and maker, is supposed to have been Doct. Samuel Higley who, a few years before this, had attempted to manufacture steel, and was somewhat distinguished in enterprises of this character.⁴

1 Stack's, *New York Americana* sale (26–27 January 2010), lot 4565.

2 Q. D. Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia of Colonial and Early American Coins* (Atlanta, 2009), 231.

3 J. H. Hickcox, *An Historical Account of American Coinage* (Albany, 1858): 74–75.

4 N. A. Phelps, *History of Simsbury, Granby and Canton, from 1643 to 1845* (Hartford, 1845): 118.

It is difficult to understand Phelps' inflated valuation of 2s 6d for the coppers in light of the stated valuation of 3d appearing on Crosby obverse 1.⁵ Could they have risen in value nine-fold while in circulation? The usual explanation for the VALUE ME AS YOU PLEASE legend on Crosby obverses 2 and 3 is that it indicates a refusal of the public to accept the coppers at their stated value. So we have a puzzle here.

In the 1720s, smelting and refining of copper ore was attempted in the vicinity of the Simsbury Mines. This work had to be performed clandestinely, as Hickcox says, due to British mercantilist laws forbidding such operations in the New World colonies. Evidently, the cost and inconvenience of the refining and smelting led to significant monetary losses and was finally abandoned.⁶ This would seem to undermine the romantic notion that the Higley coppers might have been made directly from locally mined and smelted copper, although Samuel Higley did own a copper mine at the time that the coppers were made.

Dickeson, writing in 1865, states that,

In 1728, Samuel Higley, who, besides having been authorized by the Connecticut Assembly to practice the arts of "Physick and Chirurgery [medicine and surgery]", was a blacksmith, set forth to the [Connecticut] assembly that he had—"with great pains and cost, found out and obtained a curious art, by which to convert, change, or transmute common iron into good steel, sufficient for any use, and was the very first that ever performed such an operation in America."⁷

Evidently Samuel Higley was given the exclusive right to manufacture steel for a ten-year period. This time period would take him through 1737, the last year of his life. Given the difficulties of manufacturing copper, one might question whether Samuel Higley actually made use of his steelmaking right.

In 1875, Sylvester Crosby wrote:

The Granby or Higley Tokens are supposed to have been struck by John Higley of Granby, from metal obtained from the mines at "Copper Hill" in that town, then part of Simsbury, in the State of Connecticut.⁸

Regarding the 1739-dated "broad axe" variety, he noted, "It has been said that these were the work of Dr. Samuel Higley, a physician and blacksmith: as he was not living in 1737 [*sic*, read 1739], this must be an error." Could the broad axe and legend I CUT MY WAY THROUGH be an expression of black humor with reference to the profession of the late "chirurgeon," Dr. Higley? The mystery grows.

Crosby goes on to say:

We have heard it related of Higley, that being a frequent visitant at the public house, where at the time liquors were a common and unprohibited article of traffic, he was accustomed to pay his "scot" in his own coin, and the coffers of the dram-seller soon

5 S. S. Crosby, *The Early Coins of America; and the Laws Governing their Issue* (Boston, 1875), 324–327.

6 C. R. Harte, "Connecticut's Iron and Copper, Part 1", *Annual Report of the Connecticut Society of Civil Engineers* 60 (1944): 140.

7 M. W. Dickeson, *The American Numismatic Manual* (Philadelphia, 1865): 80.

8 S. S. Crosby, *The Early Coins of America; and the Laws Governing their Issue* (Boston, 1875), 324–327.

became overburdened with this kind of cash,...of the type that proclaims its own value to be equal to what was then the price of a "potation",—three pence.⁹

The Higley referred to in the foregoing pub anecdote could be either John or Samuel, as both may have been alive when the 1737-dated "value of three pence" tokens were struck. Therefore, some disagreement arises as to whether John or Samuel, if either, was the minter of those varieties.

Some more insight into the Higley mine is provided in an 1886 article by J. M. French, who compares Higley's mine with other extensive mining operations on Copper Hill:

The exception was Higley's mine, which was distant about a mile and a half in a southerly direction from the principal works. This was marked as a private enterprise on the part of one Samuel Higley, sometimes referred to as "Doctor Higley," an ingenious blacksmith; who, a few years before this, had attempted to manufacture steel, and had manifested considerable mechanical ingenuity. His mine is chiefly notable because from it was dug the ore used in making the first money known to have been coined in the colonies...About the year 1721 smelting and refining works connected with the mines were erected on Hop Brook in Simsbury; the name Hanover being given to the place by the workmen, who came from Hanover in Germany. As the laws of Great Britain at this time prohibited this part of the business from being carried on in the colonies, the work had to be done secretly and at great disadvantage. The difficulties met with proved so great, and the methods employed were so imperfect, that the work resulted in a loss, and was soon abandoned, the ore being thereafter sent to England for smelting.¹⁰

Copper Hill later became the site of Newgate Prison.¹¹

Recent Interpretations

How have modern authors addressed the seemingly undecided issue of the minter(s) of the Higley coppers?

In a 1947 article, T. W. Robbins stated, after visit to the site of the Simsbury mine:

I went out back of the barn and, lo, there it was. Not very much to look at but quite evidently the mine. Many stones and debris filled it. Many of the stones showed traces of copper ore. Here was the mine where Mr. Higley mined the purest copper in the country. We are told that he had a thirst for liquor and when he wanted a drink he would hammer out a sheet of copper and then stamp from it copper coins which are now known as the Higley pennies.¹²

9 Crosby 1875: 326.

10 J. M. French, "The Simsbury Copper Mines," *The New England Magazine* 5 (1886): 430.

11 R. H. Phelps, *Newgate of Connecticut: Its Origin and Early History* (Camden, ME, 1996).

12 T. W. Robbins, "Background of the Higley Coppers," *The Numismatist* 60 (1947): 536–538. This paper was originally read before the Hartford Numismatic Society. Theodore W. Robbins is listed in the 1948 ANA membership directory, giving his address there and in the article as Simsbury, Connecticut.

On the question of which Mr. Higley, Robbins equivocated, "History debates whether it was John the second¹³ or Samuel."¹⁴

In 1976, in the most thorough historical analysis undertaken up to that time, Clement F. Bailey wrote that,

[In 1728] Samuel finally obtained the land which put the Higley name in the numismatic history book. ... This copper mine that Higley purchased was to be associated with the Higley name for more than one hundred and sixty years...Some of the copper from the Higley mine came out in pure chunks and it was this type of copper that Samuel used for his tokens...The Higley mine was abandoned, as far as operations are concerned, in 1831...Shortly after obtaining the copper-producing area, Samuel Higley, the physician-blacksmith, entered into another field—token production... The dies used have never been traced nor has the technique of Higley ever been revealed.

Higley coppers were produced in 1737 and 1739 as those pieces have appeared and are known. It is possible that Higley may have produced coppers as early as 1729 but no pieces have ever surfaced to back up the idea. As for the 1739 issues there is also some confusion. They may have been produced from Samuel Higley dies, but the pieces were made by his brother, John, Jr., aided by the Rev. Timothy Woodbridge and William Cradock.¹⁵

Bailey's view is that both Samuel and John minted the coppers.

In 1988, Walter Breen stated that,

Dr. Samuel Higley (ca. 1687–1737), born on the family farm near Tariffville, Conn., used his Yale degree to become first a schoolmaster, thereafter a surgeon, still later abandoning the professions to become a metallurgical pioneer. In 1727, he discovered and patented a process for making steel; later that year he bought a large land tract 1½ miles south of the "Copper Hill" (Simsbury) mines, discovered copper, and opened what was still known a century later as the Higley Mine, exporting large quantities of copper ore to England. In 1737 he began striking copper coins, which became so famous for their purity that jewelers melted down many for alloying gold and silver. Dr. Higley was aboard a ship lost at sea en route to England with some of his own copper ore...Though Dr. Samuel Higley presumably made the first 1737-dated coppers, the undated and 1739-dated pieces (and possibly some of the later 1737s) were attributed to his eldest brother John.¹⁶

Breen took the position that while Samuel was a genius who patented the first steel making process in America (great to make dies), and developed a copper mine (great to make planchets for copper coins), his death made it impossible for him to have been the sole minter of Higley coppers and raised the possibility of John Higley Jr. as an active participant in the minting process.

¹³ The reference is to Samuel's brother John. Samuel's father, who died in 1714, was also named John. See the genealogical section *infra*.

¹⁴ Robbins 1947: 536.

¹⁵ C. F. Bailey, "Dr. Samuel Higley and His Coppers," *The Numismatist* 89 (1976): 1955–1966.

¹⁶ W. Breen, *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins* (New York, 1988): 39.

In 1993, Philip L. Mossman indicated that,

The first domestic copper coinage in the colonies is attributed to Dr. Samuel Higley of Granby, Connecticut, a physician, metallurgist, and local mine operator who, in 1737, minted three pence tokens of pure copper.¹⁷

His source for this statement is Crosby who, as we have already noted, believed John Higley Jr. to have been the minter.

In 1995, Daniel Freidus reviewed the history of the Higley coppers, provided a die classification system modified from that of Michael Hodder, and listed 15 different die marriages used to strike what must have originally been a fairly substantial quantity of coppers.¹⁸ At the outset, Freidus rightly observed that, "Much of the history of the Higley coppers is still based on legend rather than documented sources."¹⁹

Freidus accepts Samuel Higley as the maker of the initial Higley coppers, since Samuel owned the land on which the Higley copper mine existed, had experience as a blacksmith, and had expertise in metallurgy. He accepts the claim that Samuel Higley's work "was continued by his elder brother, John, Jr. and various other associates," but cautions that, "None of these claims has been substantiated. If Samuel Higley died in 1737, the minter of the later issues is still a mystery."²⁰

In 2007, John J. Kraljevich, Jr., wrote,

[G]oing back to pre-Civil War texts, we find a fairly consistent story, namely, citations of [Samuel] Higley's documented steel contract in 1728 and purchase of the mine land in the same year, and stories that his mine continued after he died about 1737. This might answer the question of how Higley struck coins post-mortem. If his steel contract had not yet expired in 1737 and his mine was still operating, clearly someone was running his affairs who could derive a profit from his state steel monopoly, if nothing else.²¹

Both Crosby and Harte identify Higley's brother, John, as the associate responsible for the enterprises after Samuel's death.

Kraljevich thus joins the growing consensus that both brothers had a hand in the copper token minting operation: Samuel started it and John continued it after his death. He also notes the discovery of a sixteenth die pairing in 2007. Based on the many permutations and combinations of varieties, he concludes that it was "Hardly a cottage operation, the Higley coppers were a dynamic coinage that surely must have been noteworthy in their day."

The latest addition to the Higley coppers discussion comes from Q. David Bowers. In 2009, Bowers stated that,

17 P. L. Mossman, *Money of the American Colonies and Confederation* (New York, 1993): 139.

18 D. Freidus, "The History and Die Varieties of the Higley Coppers," in R. G. Doty, ed., *The Token: America's Other Money, Proceedings of the Coinage of the Americas Conference, October 29, 1994* (New York, 1995): 1–17; M. Hodder, "Known Varieties of the Higley Coppers," in C. W. A. Carlson and M. Hodder, eds., *The American Numismatic Association Centennial Anthology* (Colorado Springs, 1991): 6.

19 Freidus 1995: 2.

20 Freidus 1995: 4.

21 J. Kraljevich, Jr., "Higley's Coppers," *The Numismatist* 120.7 (July 2007): 73–75.

Among the most interesting of all early American issues are the copper tokens struck *circa* 1737 to 1739 by Dr. Samuel Higley of Granby, Connecticut...Sometime about the year 1737 Higley is thought to have produced a copper token, perhaps using his own copper, but this is not verified...Samuel Higley died on a voyage to England in May 1737, on a ship loaded with copper from his own mine. His oldest son, John, together with Rev. Timothy Woodbridge and William Cradock, probably engraved and struck the issue of 1739.²²

As can be seen in the foregoing citations, much of the repetitious information about the production of the Higley coppers derives from undocumented sources. Kraljevich concedes that “oral tradition has value to the historian” and finds that “[d]espite this information vacuum, we know a lot just from the coins.”²³ To Kraljevich, the iconography of the three crowned hammers on Crosby’s reverses A and B represents “a testament of support and promotion for Connecticut’s emerging mining and iron industries,”²⁴ while to Bowers it is merely a design “derived from the arms of the English blacksmith’s guild”²⁵ (Samuel Higley having been born to an English immigrant father and having been a blacksmith himself). Kraljevich thinks that THE WHEEL GOES ROUND Higley design, which is unique and not in Crosby, could tout a native Connecticut iron product;²⁶ we think it could just as likely be an expression of fatalism on the part of Samuel Higley: what goes around comes around; one who practices “chirurgary” in Higley’s era will win some patients and lose some. So whether the oral traditions are correct or whether they serve only as disinformation bearing the mantle of respectability due to their repetition is still an open question. As Bowers observes, “facts are scarce.”

Genealogical Information

Our presumed minters of the Higley coppers were two of the sons of Captain John and Hannah Higley—Samuel and John, Jr. The witness who signed the 1749 land transfer document (see below) was John Higley, a nephew of Samuel and John, Jr. The grantors of the land sold were Joseph Higley, another nephew, and Joseph’s wife Sarah Higley (*née* Case). The family tree of these persons can be found on several websites.²⁷ Shown below are the members of Captain John Higley’s immediate family born to him from both his first and second wives, as well as the second generation descendants of the three of Captain John’s children who figure in this story. The names of these three children, their spouses, the grandchildren who signed the 1749 deed, and Sarah Case Higley, are all underlined for convenient reference; all dates prior to 1752 have been converted to the Gregorian calendar, which replaced the Julian calendar in England that year.

Captain John and Hannah Higley

Capt. John Higley was born on 22 July 1649 at Frimley, Surrey, England. He married **Hannah Drake** on 9 November 1671 at Windsor, Hartford Co., CT. After Hannah’s death, Capt. John Higley married **Sarah Strong**, daughter of Return Strong and Sarah Warham, in 1696 at Simsbury, Hartford Co., CT. Capt. John Higley died on 25 August 1714 at Simsbury, Hartford Co., CT, at age 65. He was buried at Simsbury Cemetery, Simsbury, Hartford Co., CT.

²² Bowers 2009: 231.

²³ Kraljevich 2007: 24.

²⁴ Kraljevich 2007: 24.

²⁵ Bowers 2009: 231.

²⁶ Kraljevich 2007: 25.

²⁷ http://www.cyberancestors.com/cummins/ps55/ps55_274.htm; <http://www.simsburyhistory.org/SimsHistory/FirstSettlers.html>; <http://www.geni.com/surnames/higley>.

Children of Captain John and Hannah Higley

1. **John Jr.** (born 10 August 1673, Windsor, CT; died 1 December 1741, Simsbury, CT. He was a schoolmaster at Simsbury, landholder, and public office holder. He served as co-executor of his father's estate. He did not marry)
2. Jonathan (born 16 February 1675; married Ann Barber; died May 1716)
3. Elizabeth (born 13 March 1677; married Nathaniel Bancroft; died 7 December 1743).
4. Hannah (born 13 March 1678; died 1678)
5. Katherine also called Ketren (born 7 August 1679; married James Noble)
6. **Brewster** (born 1680; married **Hester Holcomb** 17 February 1708; died 17 December 1775)
7. Hannah (born 22 April 22, 1683; married Joseph Trumbull; died 7 November 1768)
8. Joseph (born ca.1685; no known marriage; died 3 May 1715)
9. **Samuel** (born ca.1687; married Abigail Beman (19 September 1719); died 1737)
10. Mindwell (born ca.1689; married first Jonathan Hutchinson; married second James Teasdale; married third Nathaniel Fitch)

Children of Captain John and Sarah Higley

1. Sarah (born 1697; married Jonathan Loomis)
2. Nathaniel (born 12 November 1699; married Abigail Filer or Fyler; died September 1773)
3. Joshua (twin, born 8 September 1701; died 2 April 1702)
4. Josiah (twin, born 8 September 1701; married Dinah Gillett; died 31 May 1751)
5. Abigail (born 4 November 1703; married Peter Thorpe; died July 1742)
6. Susannah (born 1705; married Elisha Blackman)
7. Isaac (born 20 July 1707; married first Sarah Porter; married second Sarah Loomis)

Children of Brewster Higley and Hester Holcombe

1. **Joseph Higley** was born on 21 October 1715 at Simsbury, Hartford Co., CT. Joseph Higley's second wife was **Sarah Case**, daughter of Bartholomew Case and Mary Humphrey, born on 19 March 1741 at Simsbury, Hartford Co., CT. Joseph Higley died on 5 May 1790 at Simsbury, Hartford Co., CT, at age 74.
2. **John Higley** (born 17 February 1721, in Simsbury, Hartford Co., CT; died May 1802 in Simsbury CT)

The Higley Land Transfer Deed

The January 2010 Stack's *New York Americana* auction included the document lot 4565, which was described as follows:

Document detailing sale of land in Simsbury, Connecticut, March 17, 1749.

Signed by Joseph Higley and Sarah ("x") Higley, signed by John Higley as witness. One sheet, 12 1/8 x 7 1/2", fully manuscript in slightly faded black ink. Remnants of red wax seal at lower right, some loss at lower left corner not affecting any text. Four horizontal folds, some docketing on verso, some trivial end splits at folds. An interesting document, though fairly typical in its textual description of the sale of a tract for "twenty pounds Old Tenor money." John Higley took over coinage operations after his elder brother, Dr. Samuel Higley, disappeared in a shipwreck in May 1737, making him the primary minter for the 1737-dated Higley coppers and the sole Higley responsible for the coppers dated 1739. We have never before seen his autograph on a document, despite the relative plenitude of early Connecticut manuscript material

extant. Dated just a decade after the Higley coppers were struck, and written in their home village of Simsbury, this document would make an ideal association piece to accompany one of the rare coppers struck by the family who authored it.

Based on the possible relationship to the Higley coppers, the deed (see figs. 1–2) was bought by the principal author of this paper, and with the help of the co-author, the manuscript text was transcribed as follows (with the modern equivalents of archaic words and abbreviations inserted parenthetically):

Know all men by these presents yt [that] we, Jos: [Joseph] Higley & Sarah,
Higley his wife both of Simsbury in ye [the] County of hartford
& Colony of Conecticut [sic] in New England for and in consideration
of Twenty pounds Old Tenour [tenor] money²⁸ [reference 21] by us Recd [received] of
Thomas Case of Simsbury afoer sd [aforesaid] have therefoer [sic] given
granted Sold and Do by these presents frely [sic] and absolutly [sic] give
grant & Convey unto ye sd [the said] Thomas Case & unto his heirs
& assigns [sic] forever one Certain parcel of Land Lying in
Simsbury afoer sd [aforesaid] on Chavies brook at a place Cawled [called]
Bats marsh being by Estemation [sic] thirty acrs [acres] & was former
= ly [formerly] granted by ye Inhabetence [sic] of sd [said] Simsbury to our hornd: [honored]
father Bartholemu [sic] Case of sd [said] Simsbury Deceast [sic] & Distra
buted [distributed] to ye sd [the said] Sary [Sarah] as parte [sic] of her portion as it is buted
[distributed] &
bound [bounded] on Simsbury Records Reforance [sic] being had thereto
To have & to hold sd [said] granted & bargained premeses [sic] with
all ye Rights profits & preveleges [sic] belonging or in any
wise apertaining [sic] thereto to him ye sd [the said] Thomas Case and unto
his heirs & assigns [sic] forever further moer [furthermore] we ye sd [the said] Jos:
Higley & Sarah his wife for our selves and heirs Convena

28 E. P. Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 5th ed. (Iola, WI, 2008): 11–12, 98. The term “old tenor money” refers to legal tender bills issued by the colony of Connecticut prior to an act of the colonial legislature passed in May 1740, by which that colony’s money of account was officially revalued. New tenor bills were valued at 3½ old tenor units for 1 new tenor unit.

= nt [covenant] & Ingage [sic] ye sd [the said] Thomas Case his heirs & assigns [sic]
forever yt [that] we are lawfully Cized [seized] of sd granted premeses [sic]
& have in Ourselves good Right to Dispoase [dispose] of ye same
& yt (that) it is free & Clear of all Incumberances [sic] whatsoe
= ver [whatsoever] so yt [that] he ye sd [the said] Thomas Case his heirs & assigns [sic] may
forever here after [sic] by virtue of these presents Lawfully
& peaceably have hold use & improve ye same [the Land being sold] against
all Claims & Demands whatsoever Laid there to by us or
Either of us or Either of our heirs or assigns [sic] or any person
or persons whosoever by or under us or Either of us in
witness where of [whereof] we have here unto [hereunto] Set our hands &
seals this :17: Day of March AD: 1749: Joseph Higley (wax seal)

her
Sarah X Higley (wax seal)
mark

Signed Sealed & Delivered

in the presence of us

Jos: Willcockson

John Higley

In Simsbury in Hartford County on ye

Day & year above written personaly [sic] appe

=ared [appeared] ye above named Jos: Higley & Sarah

his wife & Each of them acknowledged [sic] ye foer

going [foregoing] Instrument to be there [sic] free acte [sic] & Deed

beofer [sic] me Jos: Willcockson Just pac [Justice of the Peace]

Recording information on the back of the deed:

Received to Record Aprile [sic] 5th 1749 and Entered at Large

In Simsbury 7th Book of Deeds page 469: by me —

Jno. (John) Humphrey Register

Thos: (Thomas) Case Deed

Of Jos: [Joseph] Higley & C:

Recd: Aprile 5th 1749:

Commentary

Under the old Julian calendar, New Year's Day fell on March 25. The official change in convention from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in England and the Anglo-American colonies did not occur until 1752, at which time New Year's Day was made to occur on January 1. The adoption of the Gregorian calendar took place much earlier in Scotland and other parts of Europe, so that even before 1752, the Gregorian calendar was used in some parts of the colonies. Since the date on which the deed was made is given as "the 17 day of March 1749" and the date of recording "April 5th 1749," one must presume that either the recorder had forgotten that the Julian year had become 1750, or the people of Simsbury had begun using the Gregorian calendar earlier than the official changeover.

Of particular note in the deed is the mention of members of the Case family. Bartholomew Case was the father of both Sarah Case (wife of Joseph Higley and grantor with him), and of Thomas Case, the grantee. Therefore, the parties to the deed were brother and sister. Sarah was evidently illiterate since she signed with an X ("her mark").

However, the key point in the description of the lot containing the 1749 deed is the misidentification of the witness as John Higley, Jr., the minter. As the genealogical information indicates that this John Higley died in 1741, he could not have signed a document dated 1749. Another John Higley, the younger brother of Joseph Higley, was the subscribing witness to the document. Therefore, no signature of John Higley, the minter, is known.

The Facts

Samuel Higley was born in 1687 and was lost at sea with a load of copper ore from his mine in May 1737.

Samuel Higley bought 143 acres of land 1½ miles south of Copper Hill in 1728 where he dug a copper mine of his own.

Samuel Higley was a metallurgist of note who discovered a method of steel production and obtained exclusive rights to produce it for 10 years, beginning in 1728.

Samuel Higley was a blacksmith who was knowledgeable in working metals.

Steel was ideal for making long lasting dies to stamp out tokens.

Early attempts were made in the 1720s to illegally refine and smelt copper from local mines at Hop Brook in Granby, Connecticut, but due to the expense, these attempts were soon abandoned.

By the time the Higley mines were operational, copper was being sent to Britain to be refined and smelted.

John Higley, Jr., was born in 1673 and died in 1741.

John Higley, Jr., was Samuel Higley's elder brother, who was a landholder and schoolmaster. The earliest date on Higley coppers is 1737.

The latest date on Higley coppers is 1739.

Joseph Higley was the son of Brewster Higley, a son of Captain John Higley. Joseph was a nephew of Samuel Higley and John Higley, Jr.

John Higley, Jr., was dead at the time the 1749 deed was signed.

Joseph Higley's younger brother was named John Higley, who was alive in 1749.

Conclusions

Unfortunately, clarification of the roles that various individuals had in the minting of the Higley tokens remains elusive due to the lack of documentation. We do know that Samuel Higley had an expert knowledge of metallurgy and held a patent for making steel, which could have been used to make dies. We also know that Samuel Higley owned and worked a copper mine on his property. Being trained as a blacksmith, it is easy to suppose that Samuel was the person responsible for making the earlier Higley coppers. However, we also know he died in 1737 and that later issues of Higley coppers were dated 1739. Many previous authors have proposed that John Higley, Jr., either alone or with others, was responsible for the continued minting of these coins. We have been unable to find any documentary evidence to support this view. Both David Bowers' statement, "Facts are scarce", and Daniel Freidus' observation that, "Much of the history of the Higley coppers is still based on legend rather than documented sources," still seem quite appropriate.

Regarding the 1749 deed, it is now very clear that it was not signed by John Higley, Jr., brother of Samuel. The signature on the deed is most certainly that of the younger brother of grantor Joseph Higley. Both were nephews of John Higley, Jr.

Know all men by these presents if we, Jos. Higley & Sarah Higley his wife, both of Simsbury in the County of Hartford & Colony of Connecticut in New England for & in consideration of Twenty pounds Old Tenor money by us Act of Thomas Case, of Simsbury after D. have there for him granted sold & do by these presents freely & absolutely give grant & convey unto him of D. Thomas Case & unto his heirs & assigns forever one Certain parcel of Land lying in Simsbury after D. on Charis brook at a place called Bate marsh, bein by Estimation Thirty one & was formerly granted by the Inhabitants of D. Simsbury to our father Bartholomew Case, of D. Simsbury Deceased & Distributed to D. Sarah as part of her portion as it is bated & bound on Simsbury Records Reference being had thereto

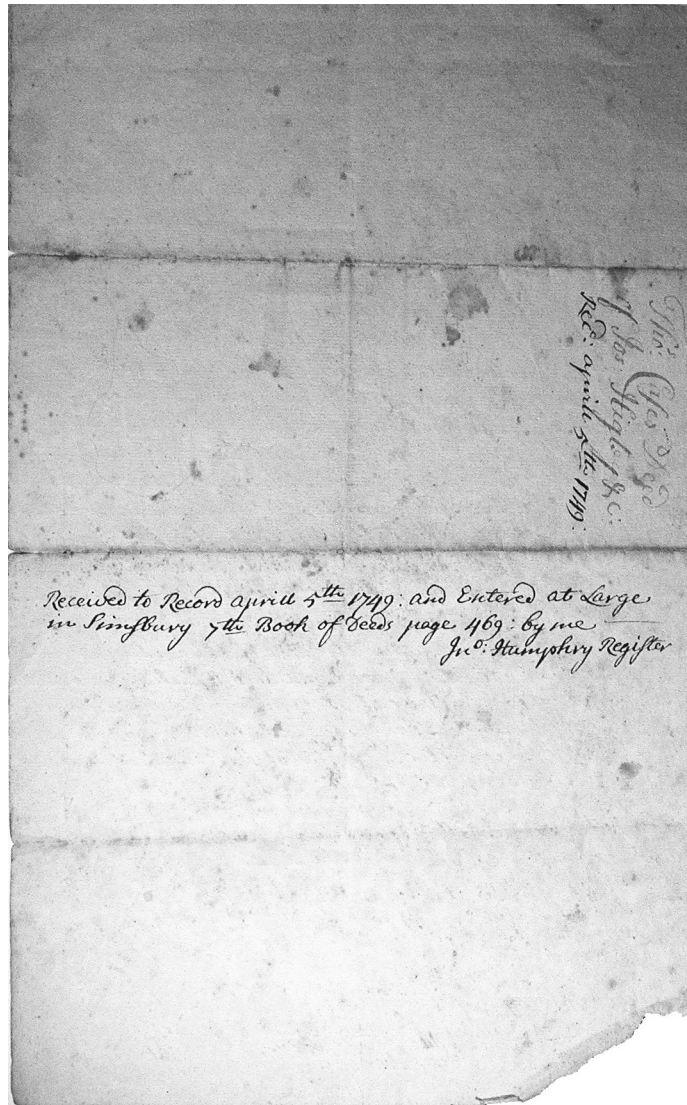
To have & to hold D. granted & bargained premises, with all of rights profits & prebendages, belonging or in any wise appertaining thereto to him of D. Thomas Case & unto his heirs & assigns forever further more we of D. Jos. Higley & Sarah his wife, for our selves & heirs Coheirs & Inheirs him of D. Thomas Case his heirs & assigns forever if we are lawfully Cried of D. granted premises & have in our selves good Right to the same of D. same & if it is free & clear of all Incumbrances whatsover we or he of D. of D. Thomas Case his heirs & assigns may forever here after by virtue of these presents lawfully & peaceably have hold use & improve of same against all Claims & Demands whatsover made there to by us or either of us or either of our heirs or assigns or any person or person whatsoever by or under us or either of us in writing in steps of we have here unto set our hands & seals this 17. Day of March A.D. 1749. Jos. Higley
Signed Sealed & Delivered
in presence of us
Jos. Willoughby
John Higley

Sarah Higley
In presence of us
Jos. Willoughby
John Higley

In presence of us
Jos. Willoughby
John Higley

Witness your above written personally appeared & appeared above named Jos. Higley & Sarah his wife & each of them acknowledged of for going instrument before me free and lawful before me Jos. Willoughby Just. of the Peace

Full text of the 1749 Higley deed. Courtesy of Roger Moore.



Recording information on the back of the 1749 Higley deed. Courtesy of Roger Moore.

A Survey of Colonial Virginia Halfpence Counterstamped with R.P.S and a Theory for their Origin

by

Roger A. Moore, MD; Moorestown, NJ

and

Dennis Wierzba; York, ME

Introduction

On December 20, 1769, the Virginia House of Burgesses passed an Act allowing the treasurer, Robert Carter Nicholas, to purchase 2,500 pounds sterling worth of copper money for the colony of Virginia.¹ It took until 1772 for the coin designs to be finalized and for an application to be made to the Royal Mint for production of the coinage. On May 20, 1773, the Crown authorized up to 25 tons of coins to be minted for the colony of Virginia, thereby making the Virginia coppers the first true colonial coinage. Sometime in August 1773 minting began with the production of five tons of Virginia halfpence (672,000 coins). These arrived in Virginia on February 14, 1774, but were not released into circulation until March 1775—fifty days before the start of the American Revolution. By that time, coinage bearing the portrait of King George III visage was no longer well-received, and some of these coins remained stored away. However, many did circulate, as indicated by the number found by metal detectorists in New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Delaware.² During archeological excavations around Williamsburg, Virginia, over 100 Virginia halfpence have been found.³ A somewhat more grisly find is reported in the August 20, 1901, edition of the Annapolis, Maryland, paper, *The Evening Capitol*. According to the report, a skull was found at an old burial ground with a 1773 colonial Virginia halfpenny in each eye socket.⁴ It was a common Christian and Jewish custom to place coins over the eyes of the dead to prevent them from opening before burial.

A number of Virginia halfpence are known counterstamped with the initials R.P.S. The counterstamp was applied sometime before the 1920s, when Frederick Canfield (1849–1926) acquired one for his collection.⁵ His ownership of an R.P.S counterstamped Virginia halfpenny is a clear indication they are not modern fabrications. As will be discussed later, the R.P.S counterstamp has not been found on any other colonial copper and the counterstamping may well have occurred in the late-1700s. One purpose of this paper is to provide a survey of the few known examples of R.P.S counterstamped Virginia halfpence and explore their possible origins.

Some Existing Specimens

Plates 1–3 illustrate the obverses and reverses of nine Virginia halfpence with the R.P.S counterstamp. A number of others exist in collections which were not available for study. Each of the nine specimens will be discussed individually after some general observations are made.

1 R. A. Moore, A. Anthony, and E. P. Newman, "Virginia Halfpence Variety Update with Revised Die Interlock Chart" CNL 45 No. 1, (April 2005): 2797–2806; E. P. Newman, *Coinage for Colonial Virginia*, ANSNM 135 (New York, 1956): 1–57.

2 Moore *et al.* 2005:

3 Personal email communication with Erik Goldstein (April 16, 2012).

4 "Old English Coins. 128 Years Old, Found in Skeleton's Eye Sockets," *The Numismatic Perspective* 10 (May 10, 2004). This issue of American Numismatic Rarities' *Numismatic Perspective* reprints the article with additional commentary.

5 Parke-Bernet Galleries sale (September 24–25, 1969), lot 56. This was a seven-coin lot consigned by the New Jersey Historical Society from the donated collection of Frederick A. Canfield. It sold for \$20 and included a VF Virginia halfpenny with the R.P.S counterstamp.

General Observations

The implement used to make the counterstamped impression was a single logo-type punch combining all letters and punctuation. This is evident from the precise spacing of the letters and stops on each of the coins, no matter where the counterstamp was applied. On all coins studied, the counterstamp occurs over the obverse image of King George III. One anomalous piece (Coin H) also has an additional, lightly-struck counterstamp on the reverse. In all but one case, the R in R.P.S appears at the top of King George's head while the remainder of the counterstamp travels down the central portion of his face and neck. In one exception (Coin I), the punch was turned 180 degrees counterclockwise when it was applied to the coin. Prominent doubling on three specimens (Coins B, H, and I) indicates that the punch was applied to their obverses at least twice. On all coins the R.P.S counterstamp is deeply impressed and only one (Coin I) exhibits additional damage—a hole punched through the mouth of King George III. However, three of the coins appear to have the edges rolled so that a small lip occurs around the outer circumference. All of the coins would be graded at least extremely fine condition, if not for the damage from the counterstamp, and all counterstamped varieties were from the obverse “with point” group.⁶ As a group, the varieties are all fairly common: 25-M (2), 23-Q (1), 27-J (5), and 26-Y (1).

Observations on Individual Coins

- A. 25-M Virginia halfpenny “with point” after GEORGIVS on obverse and seven-stringed harp on reverse. The edges of the coin are rolled slightly to produce a smooth edge and a slightly raised rim around the edge. 25.1 mm, 115.9 grains, coin turn.
- B. 25-M Virginia halfpenny “with point” after GEORGIVS on obverse and seven-stringed harp on reverse. 25.0 mm, 111.0 grains, coin turn.
- C. 23-Q Virginia halfpenny “with point” after GEORGIVS on obverse and seven-stringed harp on reverse. 25.0 mm, 108.7 grains, coin turn.
- D. 27-J Virginia halfpenny “with point” after GEORGIVS on obverse and seven-stringed harp on reverse. 25.0 mm, 116.8 grains, coin turn.
- E. 27-J Virginia halfpenny “with point” after GEORGIVS on obverse and seven-stringed harp on reverse. The edges of the coin are rolled slightly to produce a smooth edge and a slightly raised rim. 24.9 mm, 107.7 grains, coin turn.
- F. 27-J Virginia halfpenny “with point” after GEORGIVS on obverse and seven-stringed harp on reverse. 25.9 mm, 113.5 grains, coin turn.
- G. 27-J Virginia halfpenny “with point” after GEORGIVS on obverse and seven-stringed harp on reverse. The edges of the coin are rolled slightly to produce a smooth edge and a slightly raised rim around the edge. Metrological data not available.
- H. 27-J Virginia halfpenny “with point” after GEORGIVS on obverse and seven-stringed harp on reverse. The obverse is doublestruck. This is the only known specimen with the R.P.S countermark applied lightly to the reverse. 25.4 mm, 118.4 grains, coin turn.

⁶ Moore *et al.* 2005:

I. 26-Y Virginia halfpenny “with point” after GEORGIVS on obverse and eight-stringed harp on reverse. A hole has been crudely punched through the area of King George’s mouth. 25.6 mm, 115.4 grains, coin turn.

The Purpose and Origin of the Counterstamp

Possible Tradesman’s Counterstamp

Counterstamps applied with prepared punches to (usually worn) colonial coppers are often presumed to be stamp tests (regulated gold coins are an exception) or idle exercises by metal-smiths. Whether such counterstamping took place near the time of minting or much later is not always clear. A counterstamped colonial coin could continue to circulate (and acquire additional wear) as others did up until the time of the Civil War (1861–1865). However, counterstamps on colonials in very high grade strongly suggest contemporaneous activity. Russ Rulau indicates that S. Drowne (1749–1815), a gold- and silversmith from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, utilized a prepared punch to counterstamp a 1785 NOVA CONSTELLATIO copper in worn condition.⁷ Rulau also lists several other counterstamps on colonial coins. Many of these counterstamps were made with multiple individual punches, rather than single-unit, logo-type punches, and they mostly occur on worn coins. Counterstamped coins used as a form of advertising, seem to appear in the 1830s and later.⁸ Finding at least nine colonial coins involving the same host coin type and counterstamp punch, all in very high grade, is an enigma without precedent.

William Veach was the first to hypothesize that the R.P.S counterstamp was applied to the coins by an “independent local commercial tradesman who wanted to establish an image of security and integrity for his name in trade.”⁹ Therefore, he proposed that they served as tradesman tokens. Advertising counterstamps with the merchant’s name, location, and/or product were stamped on a variety of contemporaneously circulating host coins. The R.P.S counterstamp is mysterious and seems to fail the advertising purpose for a tradesman’s token. In addition, the use of only high grade colonial Virginia halfpence that did not circulate after they were stamped seems to tell against the advertising theory.

However, there exists the remote possibility that an institution (*i.e.*, a bank), organization, or individual owned an old hoard of Virginia halfpence and stamped R.P.S on the coins before giving them away. The authors are not aware of any documentation for such a numismatic travesty from the 1860s onward. There was a very active numismatic community—especially in the colonial arena—in the mid- and late nineteenth century.

The authors do not have an informed opinion on dating the R.P.S punch or its method of manufacture. If the case could be made that the punch was typical of an eighteenth-century blacksmith, the possibility that the halfpence were counterstamped long after the coins were produced could be eliminated.

Possible Communion Token Counterstamp

The authors would like to raise the alternative possibility that the counterstamped Virginia halfpence served as a type of communion token. Admittedly, like Veach, the authors have no documentation to support their suggestion, but hopefully the circumstantial evidence is enough for it to warrant consideration.

⁷ R. Rulau, *United States Tokens 1700–1900*, 4th ed. (Iola, 2004): 34.

⁸ Rulau 2004: 12–94.

⁹ W. N. Veach, “How rare are the counterstamped 1773 – Colonial Virginia copper Halfpennies?” *The Generation Newsletter of 1773 – Colonial Virginia Copper Halfpenny* 1.5 (July 4, 1991): 1–19.

Use of communion tokens dates back to the early days of Presbyterianism. They were first proposed by John Calvin (1509–1564) as a means of distinguishing the parishioners who were permitted to receive communion. French Huguenot and Scottish Presbyterian churches adopted such tokens already in the sixteenth century.¹⁰ The tokens were distributed by the elders of the church to individuals they felt to exhibit adequate knowledge and purity of faith in the days preceding a communion service. Upon entering the communion service, the tokens were collected for later reuse. Early tokens were generally made out of lead and could differ significantly in size and shape. Over time, cast lead and pewter tokens became common, but some were brass, copper, silver, nickel, zinc, ceramic, wood, celluloid, and even paper.¹¹ Some tokens were simple cut pieces of metal indented with punches.¹² Therefore, the supposition that an available coinage might be counterstamped to serve as communion tokens does not seem far-fetched.

Fledgling Presbyterian organizations were persecuted by the powerful Anglican Church who wielded control in colonial Virginia. Those who did not subscribe to the Church of England were called “non-conformists” or “dissenters.” Despite the Toleration Act of 1689 passed by Parliament, dissenters of all denominations in Virginia were required to register. Permission was necessary for them to meet and their preachers had to indicate the time and place of any service. All citizens had to pay taxes to support the Anglican Church but could not open their own church. In fact non-conformist places of worship were called meeting houses, the term church applying only to the Anglican places of worship.¹³ A few small Presbyterian congregations struggled on the coast as in Elizabeth River (Norfolk, VA). The Presbyterians, who, as a group were immigrating Scots and Irish, first established themselves as a denomination west of the Blue Ridge in the Shenandoah Valley via Pennsylvania in 1736. This was under an agreement with the Anglicans to form a buffer zone between the eastern counties and the Indians and thus “defend the frontier in exchange for the privilege of worshipping God according to their dissenter training.”¹⁴ Although a Presbyterian congregation was registered in Williamsburg in 1765, they probably met in private homes since no official church was established until 1860. In Richmond and Lynchburg, no Presbyterian fellowships were launched until 1812 and 1815, respectively. The Reformed Presbyterian Church, or Synod—a splinter group from the larger Presbyterian Church, whose acronym is R.P.S.—was founded on March 10, 1774, in Pennsylvania. This denomination, which actively supported the American Revolution, established churches scattered throughout the colonies; of particular interest are those in the Carolinas and that part of Virginia close to Pennsylvania that eventually seceded as West Virginia. Although the use of communion tokens was mentioned in their printed history, none were described.¹⁵ A second, smaller group which split from the main body of the Presbyterian Church was the Associate Reformed Presbyterians. Churches of this denomination were established in the Shenandoah Valley at the South Mountain Meeting House (Spottswood, VA) in 1742 and at Timber Ridge.¹⁶ For these scattered Virginia worshippers, as for the mainline churches, the specific form of communion tokens was a concern addressed by individual congregations. The counterstamped Virginia halfpenny may well have served local Virginia parishes west of the Blue Ridge, the date 1774 being of particular significance. One might imagine how the R.P.S

10 For an online discussion of the tokens, see <http://www.antrimhistory.net/content.php?cid=55>.

11 *Communion Tokens of the Presbyterian Churches*. Brochure printed by the Department of History of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Autumn 1992.

12 <http://www.antrimhistory.net/content.php?cid=55>.

13 A partial repeal of “these objectionable laws concerning religion” was championed by Thomas Jefferson in 1776. See Howard M. Wilson, *Tinkling Spring, Headwater of Freedom* (Fishersville, VA, 1954): 224.

14 Wilson 1954: 34–45, quote p. 221.

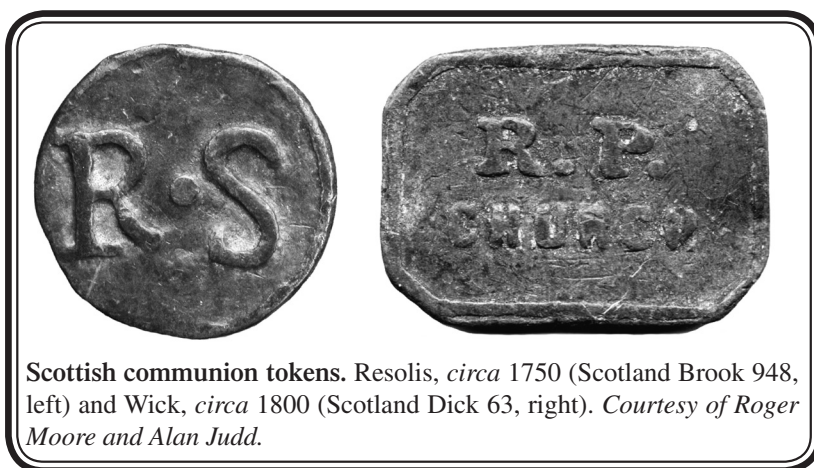
15 W. M. Glasgow, *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America* (Baltimore, 1888): 64, 68–69.

16 R. Lathan, *History of the Associate Reformed Synod of the South* (Harrisburg, 1882), p. 271; Wilson 1954: 24.

was stamped across the face of “tyrannical” George III could well have lightened their collective Whig/Presbyterian consciences at defacing the king’s copper.

Communion tokens were used in the United States in the 1700s, but began to fall out of use by the early 1800s.¹⁷ The Reformed Presbyterian Church continued to use communion tokens until the early 1900s, although by 1900 metal tokens had been largely replaced by cards. Early communion tokens in the United States often carried the initials of the church, town, or preacher. Rulau lists a Virginia communion token from the Timber Ridge Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church with the initials A.S for “Associate Synod,”¹⁸ but the authors have been unable to locate any known communion tokens marked R.P.S.

Two Scottish communion tokens carry initials similar to the R.P.S of the Virginia halfpence. One, dated to *circa* 1750, is inscribed R.S, while another, from *circa* 1800, identifies R. P. Church. Although neither of these inscriptions was made with a counterstamp, it is not difficult to imagine how a ready supply of bright, shiny, and little-used Virginia



Scottish communion tokens. Resolis, *circa* 1750 (Scotland Brook 948, left) and Wick, *circa* 1800 (Scotland Dick 63, right). Courtesy of Roger Moore and Alan Judd.

halfpence, might have been counterstamped for use as communion tokens. The communion token theory also seems to be supported by the fact that essentially all R.P.S counterstamped Virginia halfpence are still high grade coins.

Of course, R.P.S could also have multiple other meanings. One possibility that was considered was that it might represent the initials of a British Army unit serving during the Revolutionary War (beginning with R for “Royal”), but the authors have been unable to uncover information on any such unit. No mark with R.P.S has been found in Ensko’s *American Silversmiths and their Marks* reference, which suggests that it is not the signature of a known silversmith.¹⁹

Possible Source of the Virginia Coppers

Just prior to the Civil War, a keg of uncirculated Virginia halfpence was discovered in Richmond, Virginia. This find is known as the Mendes Cohen hoard, named after the coin dealer who purchased and distributed the contents of the keg.²⁰ The hoard coins typically show some mint red and feature dark, spotted discolorations. As these uncirculated coins had collector value, it is very unlikely that someone would have counterstamped a large number of them, thereby destroying much of their value. Although coin B grades AU–UNC, the rest of the examples exhibit light circulation wear and none have the dark spots normally observed on Cohen hoard coins. The high grade of the counterstamped Virginia halfpence might indirectly serve as a clue concerning when the stamping was performed. Excavated Virginia halfpence found at Colonial

17 <http://www.antrimhistory.net/content.php?cid=55>.

18 R. Rulau, *Early American Tokens*, 3rd ed. (Iola, WI, 1991): 68.

19 S. Ensko, *American Silversmiths and their Marks* (Boston, 1989).

20 W. Nipper, *In Yankee Doodle’s Pocket* (Conway, AR, 2008): 242.

Williamsburg can be evaluated in the context of other artifacts found at the same site. Coins discovered in the archaeological excavations have ranged from uncirculated to extremely poor condition but none bear the R.P.S counterstamp. Based on other artifacts recovered in company with the coins, the least circulated example seems to have been lost with material dating as early as December 1775, while the Virginia halfpennies in poor condition were found with artifacts that date to just before the Civil War.²¹ Considering the high condition of the R.P.S counterstamped Virginia coppers, it is reasonable to assume that if they were pulled from circulation to serve as communion tokens, it was done early on, probably in the period *circa* 1775–1810. The fact that they have remained in high condition until modern times, would also indicate that they were not used very often after they were punched. We speculate that a preacher's family might have kept these together for generations, or perhaps they were discovered in a "church hoard" that remained intact until it entered the numismatic market.

Conclusions

A conclusive explanation for the counterstamping of high-grade Virginia halfpence with the three-letter R.P.S counterstamp has not been given. However, speculation suggests that these counterstamped coins were produced to serve as communion tokens for a colonial-era Presbyterian church in what is now West Virginia. Although the communion token theory seems to fit the facts, it cannot be considered definitive without documentation (as in the case of the Albany church penny). Any counterstamped high-grade colonial copper is extremely rare, making the existence of at least nine R.P.S counterstamped Virginia halfpence truly remarkable. We expect that additional specimens may appear as large collections are dispersed, further revealing the unprecedented survival of an early counterstamp.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Erik Goldstein, Curator of Mechanical Arts and Numismatics at Colonial Williamsburg, for his input and information concerning the coins found in and around Williamsburg. Special appreciation is extended to those that shared images including the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Erik Goldstein, Alan Anthony, Alan Judd, and David Palmer.

Key to Plates

Plate 1

- A. Roger Moore.
- B. Dennis Wierzba.
- C. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Plate 2

- D. Erik Goldstein.
- E. Roger Moore.
- F. Dennis Wierzba.

²¹ Personal email communication with Erik Goldstein (April 16, 2012).

Plate 3

G. David Palmer.

H. Alan Anthony.

I. Roger Moore.

R.P.S Counterstamped Virginia Halfpence Plate 1



A. 25-M



B. 25-M



C. 23-Q



R.P.S Counterstamped Virginia Halfpence Plate 2



D. 27-J



E. 27-J



F. 27-J



R.P.S Counterstamped Virginia Halfpence Plate 3



G. 27-J



H. 27-J



I. 26-Y



A Spanish Half-Real Device Matrix from the Madrid Mint

by
Ray Williams; Trenton, NJ

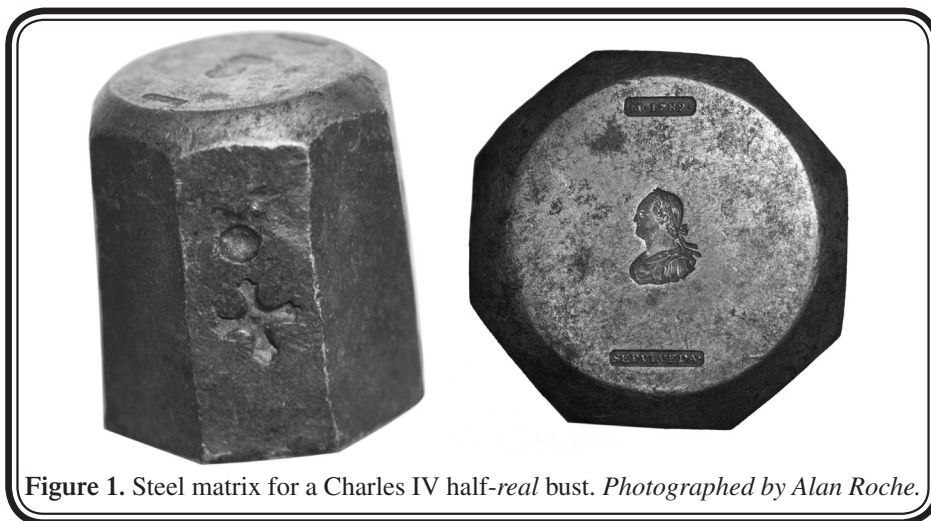


Figure 1. Steel matrix for a Charles IV half-real bust. Photographed by Alan Roche.

On May 3, 2010, Steve Frank posted an image of a “steel trial die” of Spanish origin on the colonial numismatic chat group (colonial-coins@yahoogroups.com). His image, jokingly entitled “My New Paperweight,” showed the “die” and posted an image of it next to a beer can, for a size reference. It has the incuse left-facing bust of Charles IV in the center. Above the bust in an incuse rectangle is a raised crowned M for the Madrid Mint, followed by a dot, then 1789 with a dot. Below the bust is another incuse rectangle surrounding the raised Spanish family name SEPVLEDA followed by a dot. The only other markings are a crude cross with a circle above, punched into the 10–11 o’clock side of the octagonal shape (Figs. 1–2). Steve’s “paperweight” fascinated me and, with him living nearby, I scheduled a visit. After looking at the massive (1¾ pounds) chunk of steel, I really wanted it for my collection and to study it further. Steve graciously allowed me to purchase it and reported that he had originally obtained the object from Daniel Sedwick’s *Treasure Auction #7* (April 7–9, 2010), where it was described and plated as lot 1690.

The description for the piece reads:

Madrid, Spain, steel trial die for Charles IV bust in ½-real size engraved by Gonzales de Sepulveda. 804 grams. Probably for a medal but with coin-design bust and no other details for the strike (hence a trial die and not a complete die), with engraver’s name at bottom and Madrid mintmark with 1789 date at top, octagonal body (dark and rusty) but round face (lightly polished), undoubtedly scarce. Found in colonial Guatemala.

I was pleased to learn from the auction abstract of both the colonial Guatemala provenance, since my collecting taste is closely focused on colonial America, and the first name that goes with the SEPVLEDA on the object. Still, I was immediately suspicious about the description of the piece as a “trial die.” What purpose could such a die serve? The piece might be a die left unfinished before the legends were cut, but then why punch the date and engraver’s name on it? Comparing the object to a small anvil I own (Fig. 3, below), it occurred to me that the piece is itself an anvil made to withstand impact, leading to the third and most likely explanation that

it actually served as a matrix for making bust device punches. These punches that were then used to make the dies for half-*real* coins.

The date on the matrix is 1789, so I decided to check into important dates for late eighteenth-century Spanish monarchs. I found that Charles III reigned as King of Spain from 1759 until his death on December 14, 1788. He was immediately succeeded by Charles IV, who reigned until his abdication in favor of Napoleon Bonaparte on March 19, 1808. Considering how late in 1788 Charles IV ascended the throne, it is not surprising that the bust for his coins—at least the fractional denominations—was not designed until the following year. No one in the Spanish-American colonies would have been aware of the death of Charles III until well into 1789 due to the slow rate at which news crossed the Atlantic.

When I showed the matrix to ANS Curator Robert Hoge, who is well known for his interest in and knowledge of Spanish and Spanish-American numismatic material, his eyes grew large. It felt good to see that he was as excited about this piece as I was. Together we looked through the ANS trays of half-*reales* from the Spanish-American mints. Many of the coins had busts very similar to the bust on the matrix, but how could we know for sure if they were identical?

We picked out several half-*real* coins from different mints, and set them aside to be photographed along with the matrix. Through the use of a computer program, a digital image of the matrix can be reversed and overlaid on top of images of the coins. This would tell us if the punches that made the dies were themselves made from my matrix. Figure 5 (below) shows the obverse of an 1808 Spanish-American half-*real* coin from the Mexico City Mint and a reversed image of the bust on the punch matrix. Using his computer expertise, Jack Howes constructed digital overlays that would allow for the close comparison of the bust on the coin and on the matrix by placing the image of the coin over the reversed image of the matrix. Any differences would be obvious immediately.

On a computer screen, the opacity of one image or the other can be changed, showing even better how the images compare. In figure 5, the left overlay pictures the reversed matrix bust with the coin image very lightly overlaid. The right overlay shows a strong image of the coin overlaid on the reversed bust matrix. The digital overlays seem to prove that the bust punches used to create the dies for Spanish-American half-*reales* minted coins were indeed made from this Madrid matrix, or one identical to it. Clearly it was more cost effective to create matrices in

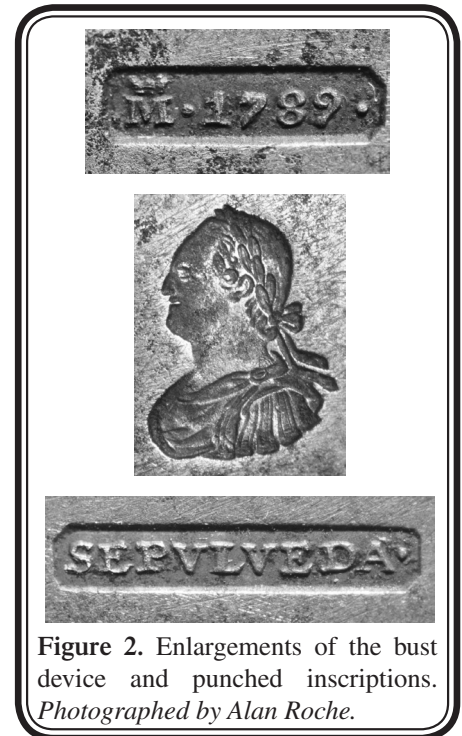


Figure 2. Enlargements of the bust device and punched inscriptions.
Photographed by Alan Roche.

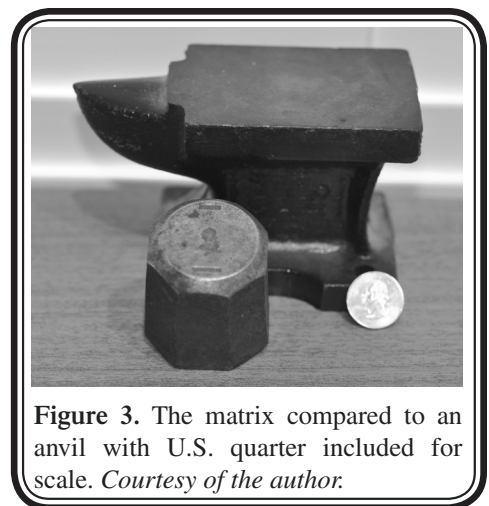
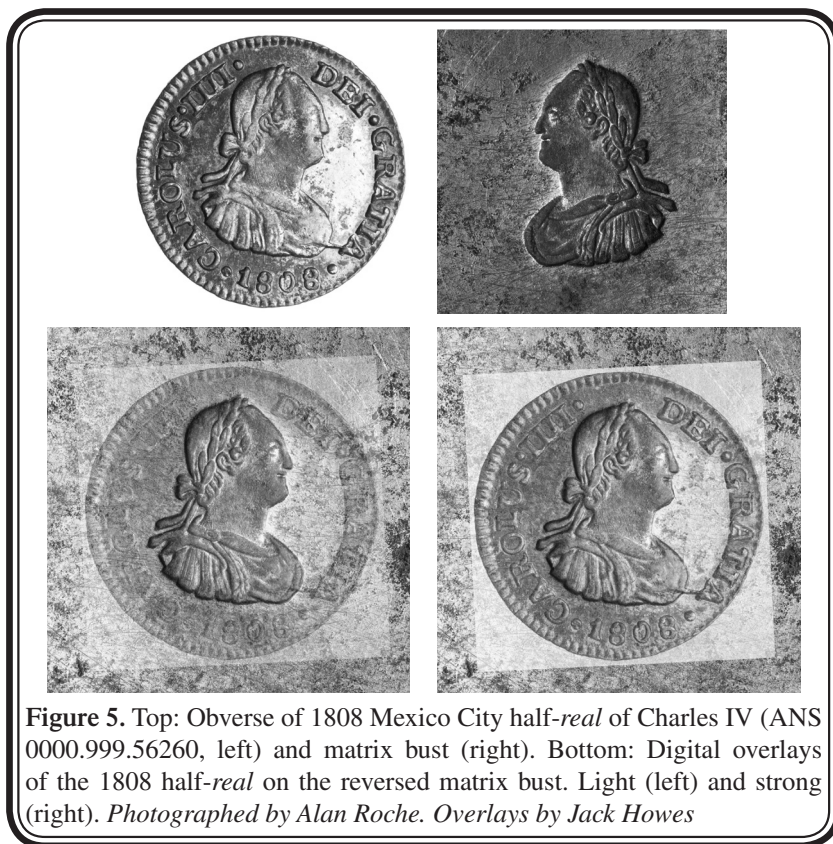


Figure 3. The matrix compared to an anvil with U.S. quarter included for scale. *Courtesy of the author.*



Spain and ship them to the Spanish-American colonies where they were then used to create tools, than to ship finished die-making tools.

In the December 2005 Cayón Subastas auction, several Spanish matrices and a number of number of punches were offered for sale. Included in the offering were punch matrices of Charles IV that were very similar to mine (Fig. 6, below).

The catalog description for the half-real punch matrix (center in Fig. 6) is as follows:

Matriz del busto de Charles IV

Tipo: Busto de Charles IV para utilizar en los Medios Reales de los Virreinos americanos.

Punzones: Arriba; M coronada•1789•

Debajo; SEPVLVEDA•

Marca de herrero fabricante del tocho: cruz flor delisada con punto central impuesta en el lado superior izquierdo y punto arriba.

Cuerpo octogonal.

Alto: 56'2 mm. Base: 47'8 mm. Cabeza: 44'8 mm. Diámetro: 38 mm.



Figure 6. Charles IV matrices sold in the December 2005 Cayón Subastas auction. *Courtesy of Adolfo Cayón.*

Thanks to the assistance of Robert Hoge and Jorge Proctor, this is translated as:

Matrix of the bust of Charles IV

Type: Bust of Charles IV to use on the half reales of the American Viceroyalties.

Punches: Above; crowned M•1789•

Below, SEPVLVEDA•

Mark of the blacksmith of the iron bar: an outlined floreate cross with a central dot stamped on the upper left side and dot above.

Octagonal body.

Height: 56.2 mm. Width: 47.8 mm x 44.8 mm. Surface diameter: 38 mm.

With a respected Spanish auction house describing this piece as a punch matrix, my original suspicions now seem to be fully vindicated.

The December 2005 Cayón Subastas auction catalog was supplemented by the biographies of the different engravers whose names have appeared on matrices over the decades. Here it is reported that the 1789 matrix was engraved by Mariano Gonzáles de Sepúlveda, who was born in 1774, and studied in Paris under the famous engraver, Juan Pedro Drotz.¹ This seemed rather unlikely as it would mean that the matrix was engraved by a fifteen-year-old in 1789.

In an email communication with Adolfo Cayón (of Cayón Numismática),² I expressed my doubts about Mariano being the engraver of this matrix. He agreed that it would be unlikely for a youth of fifteen years to have served as an engraver for the Madrid Mint, and suggested that the Sepúlveda whose name appears on the 1789 matrix is more likely to be Mariano's father, Pedro González de Sepúlveda. Starting in 1774, Pedro González de Sepúlveda worked as Second Engraver at the mint. Upon the death of First Engraver Tomás Francisco Prieto, in 1782, Pedro was appointed First Engraver on December 15, 1783, a position he held until March 5, 1814. Mariano was appointed Second Engraver on February 7, 1802 and became Engraver General on February 5, 1824.³

As a collector, I am thrilled to have the 1789 matrix in my collection. It brings me pleasure to look at it, knowing that the Spanish-American mints actually used it 223 years ago, and to share its history with others. In Steve's honor, I have actually used it as a paper weight for my notes while writing this article. I would be very interested to hear of any further information,

1 Cayón Subastas sale (December 14–15 2008): 20.

2 June 18, 2012.

3 www.mcnbiografias.com/app-bio/do/show?key=gonzalez-de-sepulveda-pedro.

thoughts, or observations, on the matrix from readers. I am reachable by email at njraywms@optonline.net.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the many people who assisted me in researching and writing this article. These include, Steve Frank, who originally sold me the matrix and without whom there would be no article; Robert Hoge, Elizabeth Hahn, and Alan Roche of the American Numismatic Society for their research and photographic assistance; Jack Howes, for his assistance in creating the image overlays; Adolfo Cayón, Steven Clark, Stan Dilcher, Ricardo de León Tallavas, and Jorge Proctor, for their research assistance and for reading an earlier version of this paper; Oliver Hoover, for his contributions and for not harassing me over how long this article has taken; and lastly, but most importantly, Diane Williams, for her tolerance of her husband's addiction to colonial numismatics.

FUGIO COPPERS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

**Plate III
(Newman 11-B to 12-X)
by
Oliver D. Hoover; Burlington, Ontario¹**

Introduction

On April 21, 1787, the Continental Congress established a contract for producing a national copper coin in an attempt to combat the flood of lightweight counterfeit coppers that were damaging the economy. In the same year, on July 6, it was resolved that the new coin should weigh 157.5 grains and feature designs created by Benjamin Franklin for the Continental Currency dollar and fractional paper money in 1776. The obverse depicts a sundial with the mottoes, FUGIO ("I [viz. Time] Fly") and MIND YOUR BUSINESS, while thirteen linked rings, symbolizing the thirteen United States and the legend UNITED STATES, WE ARE ONE appear on the reverse.

Thanks to a large bribe to the head of the U.S. Treasury Board, the contract was awarded to James Jarvis, who was also involved with the production of Connecticut coppers. Jarvis had the dies cut by the Connecticut die maker, Abel Buell, but then found that he could only obtain locally thirty of the three hundred tons of copper he was required to convert into coin. He attempted to find the needed copper in England, while leaving his father-in-law, Samuel Broome, in charge of the minting operation. Broome used about four tons of the metal to produce some 400,000 FUGIO coppers, but used the remainder to produce lighter and more profitable Connecticut coppers. When the Congress discovered what had happened, it voided the contract on September 16, 1788, and subsequently resolved to seek restitution. Jarvis wisely decided to remain in Europe. His father-in-law soon joined him there after selling the mint equipment to the New York coiner and counterfeiter, Thomas Machin. Abel Buell also seems to have fled the United States after passing his tools on to his son, Benjamin.

The ANS collection of FUGIO coppers presently consists of some 59 specimens (not including restrikes and electrotypes). Fourteen of these were donated to the Society by the Bank of New York, in 1949. These coins come from the so-called Bank of New York hoard, consisting of a keg of FUGIO coppers obtained by the bank in 1788, but which was forgotten until 1856 and then again until 1926. In 1948, members of the ANS were permitted to study the remaining 1,641 pieces. Another 10 specimens were donated by Edward R. Bamsley, who is perhaps best known for his superlative collection of Connecticut coppers. The remaining part of the ANS FUGIO collection evolved organically over time.

This third plate in a series to fully publish the FUGIO coppers in the ANS cabinet includes four pieces from the Bank of New York hoard (Nos. 21, 23, and, 28–29). One specimen (No. 26) was a gift of the New Jersey Historical Society, in 1931, while another (No. 22) came to the Society as part of the bequest of the Robert J. Eidlitz collection (5,395 pieces), in 1940. Eidlitz was a notable New York architect and collector of medals who served on the ANS Council from 1916 until his death in 1935. Coin no. 25 was part of the 1963 Barnsley donation. Three coins (Nos. 24, 27, and 30) lack provenance information entirely.

In the variety sequence Newman 8-B to 11-A, the ANS currently lacks an example of 12-U.

¹ The commentary and catalog have benefited from discussion with Philip Mossman and Jeff Rock.

Catalog

Obv. *FUGIO.* / *1787*. Sun shining on sundial. In exergue, MIND♦YOUR♦♦ BUSINESS.

Rev. UNITED * STATES * on raised ring. Within, WE ARE ONE. Thirteen linked rings inscribed with the names of the original United States.

Newman 11-B

21. 28mm, 165.2 grains. Clashed obverse. ANS 1949.136.10.

Newman 11-X

22. 28mm, 136.1 grains. Clashed obverse. ANS 1940.100.209.

23. 28mm, 143.9 grains. Clashed obverse. ANS 1949.136.11.

24. 28mm, 173.6 grains. Clashed obverse. ANS 0000.999.28529.

Newman 12-M

25. 28mm, 146.3 grains. ANS 1963.103.4.

Newman 12-S

26. 28mm, 168.3 grains. ANS 1931.58.534.

27. 28mm, 140.1 grains. ANS 0000.999.28530.

Newman 12-X

28. 28mm, 170.1 grains. ANS 1949.136.12.

29. 28mm, 164.6 grains. ANS 1949.136.13.

30. 28mm, 159.2 grains. ANS 0000.999.28531.

**FUGIO COPPERS IN THE COLLECTION OF
THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY**

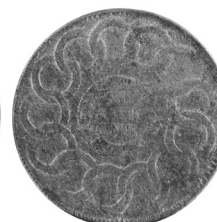
**Plate III
(Newman 11-B to 12-X)**



21



22



23



24



25



26



27



28



29



30



CONNECTICUT COPPERS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

**Plate VIII: 1785
(Miller 6.4-I to 7.1-D)**

**by
Oliver D. Hoover; Burlington, Ontario¹**

Introduction

The Confederation period copper coinage of the state of Connecticut was legally struck in New Haven by the Company for Coining Coppers from November 12, 1785, to June 1, 1787. From June 1, 1787, to the Fall of 1788, Connecticut coppers continued to be struck by James Jarvis and Company. The types essentially consisted of modified versions of the royal bust obverse and Britannia reverse familiar from contemporary English halfpence. The Latin regal legends were replaced by new ones that identified the coppers as being issued by the authority of Connecticut (AUCTORI CONNEC) and advertised American independence and liberty (INDE ET LIB). This coinage was popular, spawning imitative issues struck for Vermont and numerous illegal counterfeits. The problem of counterfeiting combined with apparent mint irregularities led to a state inquest in January of 1789. On June 20, 1789, the right to produce state coppers for Connecticut was officially terminated by the federal government.

The collection of Connecticut coppers maintained by the American Numismatic Society may be one of the most complete in existence and contains the vast majority of the die varieties recorded in Henry C. Miller's *The State Coinage of Connecticut* (New York, 1920). The Society's Connecticut holdings are so extensive due to two major gifts in the early twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In 1931, the Frederick Canfield collection of Connecticut coppers (285 pieces) was loaned and subsequently donated to the ANS by the New Jersey Historical Society. In 2005, the American Numismatic Society acquired the Connecticut collection of Edward R. Barnsley (1131 pieces) thanks to the generosity of James C. Spilman and the Colonial Newsletter Foundation.

This eighth plate in a series to fully publish the Connecticut coppers in the ANS cabinet includes two pieces from the Canfield collection (Nos. 74 and 77) and seven from the Barnsley/CNLF gift (Nos. 71–72, 75–76, and 78–80). Coin no. 73 lacks any provenance information.

The Canfield coins both have white painted die varieties (PDV) on the obverse giving the respective Miller numbers. A very similar white PDV also appears on coin no. 73, which would strongly suggest that it is a Canfield piece that became disassociated with its provenance record early on. This coin is also notable for the “35” added to the reverse in black ink. It is unclear what this number may signify. It is not the corresponding Crosby number.

¹ The commentary and catalog have benefited from discussion with Randy Clark and Philip Mossman.

Catalog

Obv. AUCTORI: CONNEC.: Laureate and cuirassed bust right, imitating regal halfpence of George III.

Rev. Legend as indicated. Liberty/Columbia/Connecticut seated left on globe, holding olive branch and pole topped by liberty cap; grounded shield with state arms (three grape vines) beside. In exergue, 1785.

Miller 6.4-I

- 71. 29mm, 122.2 grains. INDE: -:- ET LIB:. ANS 2005.37.407.
- 72. 29mm, 131.79 grains. INDE: -:- ET LIB:. ANS 2005.37.408.
- 73. 29mm, 134.2 grains. INDE: -:- ET LIB:. Painted Miller die variety on obverse (6⁴ I in left field and M in right). "35" painted on reverse. ANS 0000.999.19825.

Miller 6.4-K

- 74. 29mm, 125.6 grains. INDE: -:- ET LIB:. Painted Miller die variety on obverse (6⁴ K¹ in left field and M in right). ANS 1931.58.430.
- 75. 29mm, 135.6 grains. INDE: -:- ET LIB:. ANS 2005.37.409.
- 76. 29mm, 137.1 grains. INDE: -:- ET LIB:. ANS 2005.37.410.

Miller 6.5-M

- 77. 29mm, 130.8 grains. INDE: * ET LIB: *. Painted Miller die variety on obverse (6⁵ M in left field and M in right). ANS 1931.58.431.
- 78. 29mm, 135.8 grains. INDE: * ET LIB: *. ANS 2005.37.411.

Miller 7.1-D

- 79. 29mm, 137.6 grains. INDE: -:- ET LIB:. ANS 2005.37.90.
- 80. 29mm, 133.6 grains. INDE: -:- ET LIB:. ANS 2005.37.91.

CONNECTICUT COPPERS IN THE COLLECTION OF
THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

Plate VIII: 1785
(Miller 6.4-I to 7.1-D)



71



72



73



74



75



76



77



78



79



80



NEW JERSEY COPPERS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

Plate VIII: 1787 (Maris 34-J to 38-Y)

by

Oliver D. Hoover; Burlington, Ontario¹

Introduction

The partnership of Walter Mould, Thomas Goadsby, and Albion Cox received a two-year contract to produce three million copper coins for the state of New Jersey on June 1, 1786. Their coins carried the obverse type of a horse head and plow derived from the state seal and an American shield on the reverse. The legends give the Latin name of the state (NOVA CÆSAREA) and present the national motto of the United States (E PLURIBUS UNUM) for the first time on any coin. By the Fall of 1786 the partners had fallen into disagreement and divided the coinage quota between a mint operated by Goadsby and Cox at Rahway, near Elizabethtown (now Elizabeth), NJ, and another operated by Mould near Morristown, NJ. Further problems developed in 1788. Mould ceased his involvement with the coinage at this time and Cox faced litigation by his creditors and by Goadsby, which resulted in the seizure of the mint equipment. By the middle of the year, the remainder of the coining contract and the Rahway mint equipment had been obtained by Matthias Ogden, the primary mover behind the New Jersey coinage legislation. Despite having access only to dies dated 1786 and 1787, Ogden continued to strike New Jersey coppers at his barn in Elizabethtown until as late as 1790.

The American Numismatic Society's holdings of New Jersey coppers are extensive, thanks to the New Jersey Historical Society's donation of duplicates from the Frederick Canfield collection (24 pieces) in 1931 and the purchase of a large part of the Harry Prescott Clark Beach collection (829 pieces) from Henry Grünthal in 1945. Grünthal, who had studied numismatics in Germany, later went on to become Assistant to the Chief Curator and Curator of European and Modern Coins at the ANS from 1953 to 1973. Most of the die varieties identified by Edward Maris in *A Historic Sketch of the Coins of New Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1881) may be found in the ANS collection.

On this eighth plate in a series to fully publish the New Jersey coppers belonging to the American Numismatic Society, all coins except one (No. 76) come from the 1945 Beach/Grünthal purchase. Coin no. 74 was purchased in 1944 from W. F. Webb together with a 1795 U.S. half cent overstruck on a Talbot, Allum, and Lee token. Both coins entered the Society's cabinet for the grand total of \$12.17.

In the variety sequence 34-J to 38-Y, the ANS currently lacks an example of 35-W and 36-J.

¹ The commentary and catalog have benefited from discussion with Philip Mossman, Roger Siboni, and Raymond Williams.

Catalog

Obv. NOVA CÆSAREA, around. Head of horse right, above plow right; in exergue, 1787.

Rev. *E*PLURIBUS*UNUM*, around. American shield emblazoned with a field of argent, six pales gules, and a chief azure.

Maris 34-J

71. 29mm, 138.2 grains. Sprig below horse head. ANS 1945.42.687.

72. 29mm, 147.8 grains. Sprig below horse head. ANS 1945.42.688.

Maris 34-V

73. 29mm, 114.8 grains. Sprig below horse head. Overstruck on Machin's Mills imitation British halfpenny. ANS 1945.42.689.

74. 29mm, 156.9 grains. Sprig below horse head. Overstruck on Machin's Mills imitation British halfpenny. Holed. ANS 1945.42.690.

Maris 35-J

75. 29mm, 143 grains. Sprig below horse head. ANS 1945.42.691.

Maris 37-J

76. 29mm, 146.6 grains. "Goiter" break on obverse. ANS 1944.64.2.

Maris 37-Y

77. 29mm, 160.1 grains. "Goiter" break on obverse. ANS 1945.42.694.

Maris 37-f

78. 29mm, 147 grains. "Goiter" break on obverse. ANS 1945.42.692.

79. 29mm, 156.3 grains. "Goiter" break on obverse. ANS 1945.42.693.

Maris 38-Y

80. 29mm, 149.3 grains. Sprig below horse head. ANS 1945.42.698.

NEW JERSEY COPPERS IN THE COLLECTION OF
THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

Plate VIII: 1787
(Maris 34-J to 38-Y)



71



72



73



74



75



76



77



78



79



80



MASSACHUSETTS BAY SILVER IN THE COLLECTION OF THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

Plate I: NE Shillings and Sixpence (Noe I-A to III-C / Salmon 1-A to 3-D)

by
Oliver D. Hoover; Burlington, Ontario¹

Introduction

On May 26–27, 1652, the Massachusetts General Court issued Acts for the establishment of a silver mint in Boston as a measure of protection against the increasing problem of light weight Spanish-American cobs circulating in Massachusetts Bay. The Boston silversmiths, John Hull and John Sanderson were appointed to operate the mint. They were required to produce coins of sterling (.925) fineness in English denominations, but at a reduced weight standard of 72 grains to the shilling. The official weight of the contemporary English shilling was 92.9 grains.

Between 1652 and 1682, Hull and Sanderson struck four series of silver coins for Massachusetts Bay. The earliest of these, produced in June–October 1652, consisted of crude, blank planchets marked with two stamps: NE for New England on the obverse and a value mark in Roman numerals on the reverse. Legislation was passed, on October 19, 1652, to abandon this simple design in favor of a more coin-like design produced by full-size dies. The obverse of the new coinage featured a willow tree, while the English legend, MASATHVSETS IN / NEW ENGLAND AN DOM was placed in the border, broken between the obverse and reverse. The 1652 date of the original mint legislation and the value indicator also appeared in the center of the reverse. The willow tree coinage continued in production until c. 1660 or 1662, when the willow on the obverse was replaced by an oak tree. The change in tree was also accompanied by a change in production technology. While the willow tree coinage had been struck by hand, the new oak tree series was struck in a rocker arm press. In c. 1667, the tree was again changed, this time from an oak to a pine. The pine tree coinage—the most enduring of the Massachusetts silver series—was struck until 1682, when the mint contract expired. Hull died the following year. Although sporadic attempts were made to revive the mint until 1690, these were quashed by the restored Stewart kings, Charles II (1659–1685) and James II (1685–1688), and finally put to rest by the increased value of silver and restored confidence in Spanish-American coins at the end of the 1680s.

The cabinet of the American Numismatic Society is home to some 151 authentic pieces of Massachusetts Bay silver of all four series, as well as a large selection (70 pieces) of electrotypes and fakes. The core of the collection is almost certainly the 51 pieces donated by the prominent New York collector, William B. Osgood Field, in 1946. The ANS collection includes most of the varieties identified by Sydney P. Noe in his three major studies: *The New England and Willow Tree Coinage* (1943), *The Oak Tree Coinage of Massachusetts* (1947), and *The Pine Tree Coinage of Massachusetts* (1952), as well as in Christopher Salmon's recent review and reassessment of the coinage, *The Silver Coins of Massachusetts* (2011).

¹ The commentary and catalog have benefited from discussion with Louis Jordan, Philip Mossman, and Christopher Salmon.

This first plate in a series to fully publish the Massachusetts Bay silver coins belonging to the American Numismatic Society features the complete ANS holdings of NE silver. All coins except one (No. 1) come from the Osgood Field donation of 1946. Coin no. 1 was purchased from the flamboyant Philadelphia coin dealer, Henry Chapman, in 1911. It came with a an oak tree twopence, a pine tree shilling, a pewter Continental dollar, a Massachusetts copper cent, and a Kentucky halfpenny, all for the princely sum of \$78.92.

The ANS currently lacks an example of the NE threepence, of which only two examples have ever been reported.

For an important recent survey of the NE coinage, see Jack Howes' article in *CNL* 143, pp. 3541–3593.

Catalog

Shillings

Obv. Script NE in incuse square.

Rev. XII in incuse rectangle.

Noe I-A/Salmon 1-B

1. 30mm, 70.3 grains. Early reverse die state. ANS 1911.85.2.

Noe II-A/Salmon 2-B

2. 29.8mm, 69.4 grains. Late reverse die state. ANS 1946.89.9.
3. 28.4mm, 71.4 grains. Late reverse die state. ANS 1946.89.10.
4. 26.4mm, 66.6 grains. Middle reverse die state. ANS 1946.89.11.

Noe III-B/Salmon 3-C

5. 28.4mm, 71.4 grains. ANS 1946.89.72.

Noe III-C/Salmon 3-D

6. 28.6mm, 70.2 grains. ANS 1946.89.6.
7. 30.6mm, 71.6 grains. ANS 1946.89.7.
8. 28.4mm, 70.6 grains. ANS 1946.89.8.

Sixpence

Obv. Script NE in incuse following contours of letters.

Rev. XII in incuse rectangle.

Noe 1/Salmon 1-A

9. 23.6mm, 31.3 grains. ANS 1946.89.5.

**MASSACHUSETTS BAY SILVER IN THE COLLECTION OF
THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY**

**Plate I: NE Shillings
(Noe I-A to III-B / Salmon 1-B to 3-D)**



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9